

13. COMPETITION FOR FOOD BETWEEN A GARDEN LIZARD
CALOTES VERSICOLOR (DAUDIN) AND A MAGPIE ROBIN
COPSYCHUS SAULARIS LINN.

On April 6, 1998, at about 1230 hrs, I saw a garden lizard *Calotes versicolor* chasing a centipede *Scolopendra* sp. for a distance of about 10 m in a garden at Garigaon, Guwahati, Assam. The centipede was moving fast and the lizard was playing with it; it held the centipede and set it free many times. Suddenly, a magpie robin *Copsychus saularis* appeared, and attempted to steal the prey of the calotes. At this, the calotes became aggressive, standing up on its hind legs, holding the anterior portion of the body upright and attempting to bite the bird, but the bird moved smartly to avoid the attack.

Taking advantage of the interruption, the centipede started to move away, but as it was already injured, it could not make much headway before being sighted by the magpie robin. The

bird now left the calotes alone, and tried to fly away with the centipede, but succeeded in getting only about half of the centipede — the calotes having retained the other half.

The magpie then sat about 5 m away and the calotes charged towards the bird, leaving its portion of the prey on the ground. This time the bird flew away, holding its portion of the centipede in its beak. To my astonishment, the calotes did not come back to regain its share of the kill.

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14. PURPLERUMPED SUNBIRD *NECTARINIA ZEYLONICA* (LINN.)
AT GANDHINAGAR, GUJARAT

In 'Birds of Gujarat — A Sálím Ali Centenary year overview' *JBNHS* 93(3), December 1996, I had this to say about this attractive little bird: '... resident bird watchers of Vadodara and Surat may well come across a good many more' in response to Sálím Ali's 'a single unconfirmed sight record.' I had always been puzzled why this otherwise common bird of the peninsular gardens was not more widespread and common in Gujarat, and I was happy to have recorded it in Ahmedabad a year ago (1997). For a month, I have been aware of sunbirds around my Gandhinagar home, emanating calls at a higher note and sounding more lispings, and I was sure I was not hearing the ubiquitous purple sunbird *N. asiatica*, but at 60, one does not place much credence on small variations of sound, and I have long ago lost the brashness of youth to jump to conclusions,

however valid. Mark my joy then, at finding a pair of purplerumped sunbirds among a flock of other small garden birds chivvying our cat and her kitten, just outside my window. I took the opportunity to observe the female carefully. She had a considerably shorter and finer bill, showed a more distinctive yellow on the throat and breast, and had a black tail with rather prominent white ends to the outer feathers. This was in clear contrast to the female purple sunbird which looked more leggy and off colour. But these finer points are not to be relied on when birds are flitting around among tall trees. It is the variation of the call, that is very distinct and draws attention. This morning I saw the *zeylonica* feeding on my kadamb tree.

The question is — have we been overlooking this sunbird, which I doubt, or is the species expanding its range? An ecological